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couragement to any one engaged in the arduous task of opening a route to the western coast. It is not in a spirit of rivalry or opposition, then, that the second expedition is proposed, but as an extension of the undertaking projected by the Government. They want an exploration of unknown territory within South Australia, and Mr. Ball is desirous of connecting that territory with the western coast. Both these enterprises are important, and the one may be made to assist the other.

The honour of performing the only great feat of Australian exploration which which yet remains to be achieved ought to belong to this colony. The unknown country which it is proposed to examine lies adjacent to our own territory, and may be entered by a route which Stuart opened in the course of his first remarkable expedition—a route which he believed would have led him into a well-grassed and well-watered region, but which he and his one companion had to abandon from their being utterly destitute of supplies. Thus, the door which leads into this unknown region has already been opened, and it is probable that the first explorer who enters will find a very favourable country before him. But it is not only from what Mr. Stuart saw that we are justified in forming a favourable opinion of the country to the westward. We published some information a short time ago from Mr. Larnach, a gentleman from Western Australia, relative to a scheme for connecting the country near the Great Bight on the south coast with the very point on the western coast which Mr. Ball now proposes to reach. Mr. Larnach, who had been inland a considerable distance from the Great Bight, had judged from information received from natives and from other sources that an exploration from coast to coast would be of easy accomplishment. So fully was he convinced of this that he made an offer to the Western Australian Government on behalf of himself and others for taking up a large area of land on condition that when the party had succeeded in driving sheep from the one coast to the other they should be allowed certain pre-emptive rights over a portion of the land included in their leases. This offer is at the present moment under consideration, the Local Government having been obliged to refer it to the Imperial authorities on account of such matters not being provided for by the land regulations of the colony. Supposing, then, that Mr. Larnach's scheme should be approved of, his party will, at a very early date, start for the western coast. They believe, from what the natives have told them and from what they have seen of the country round the Bight, that there is a good pastoral region inland. All this is favourable to the supposition that Mr. Ball's expedition would be successful. If there is good country to the westward, he would inevitably meet with it by crossing from Mount Margaret; and even if the Western Australian pioneers were to be striking out at the same time for their proposed settlement on the opposite coast, the two expeditions would in no respect nullify each other's usefulness.

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4. *Notes on the New Settlement of Somerset, near Cape York.* By  
Sir GEORGE BOWEN, Governor of Queensland.

Communicated through the COLONIAL OFFICE.

SIR GEORGE BOWEN, in a despatch to Mr. Cardwell, dated October 4th, 1864, gives the following particulars relating to the founding of the settlement on Albany Island, the preparatory surveys for which have been recorded in previous communications published in the Society's 'Proceedings':—\*

H.M.S. *Salamander*, Commander the Hon. J. Carnegie, returned to Moreton Bay on the 19th September, bringing the news of the successful foundation of

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\* See vol. viii. p. 114.

the new settlement of Somerset. Sir G. Bowen presumed the necessary measures would be taken to notify to mariners in general the establishment, by the Government of Queensland, of the two new ports and settlements on the north-eastern coast of Australia,—namely, at Cardwell, in Rockingham Bay, and at Somerset, near Cape York. The crews of vessels wrecked in Torres Straits, and the neighbouring seas, will now find safe harbours of refuge, while the captains of passing ships can procure at the new ports fresh provisions and water and other supplies. He had in previous despatches drawn attention to the facilities now given for the establishment of a line of mail-steamers from Singapore to Sydney, *viâ* Torres Straits, affording (in addition to many other advantages) means of direct communication between Australia, India, and China. Arrangements could, he believed, be made by which this proposed new line of steamers might be combined with the lines already established. Periodical steam-communication now exists between Singapore, Batavia, and Timor at one end, and between Sydney, Brisbane, and Cape York at the other, and it remains only to supply the link wanting between Cape York and Timor, a distance of about 1000 miles.

Commander the Hon. J. Carnegie reported, on his return to Moreton Bay, that the *Salamander* arrived at Port Albany on the 29th July. The process of settlement commenced by the felling of trees, a few yards above the bend in Somerset Bay; a labour which was performed by a party of marines, assisted by the ship's carpenters. The barque *Golden Eagle*, with the passengers and stores for the colony, arrived on the 1st of August, and the following morning the live stock was landed; the sheep, 252 in number, were placed on Albany Island, and the horses, seven in number, on the mainland. The site for the town of Somerset had been admirably chosen—on an elevation of from 60 to 70 feet above the level of the sea, exposed to the sea-breezes during either monsoon, bordered on the west by a constant running stream of fresh water, and commanding on the north an extensive and most picturesque view of Torres Straits with the adjoining islands. All vessels passing through the Straits will be within signal-distance. The situation appeared to be remarkably healthy, judging from the manner in which the crew of the *Salamander* were necessarily exposed to the sun and water, from sunrise to sunset, for 30 days without any ill-effects. Commander Carnegie relates that he made a short journey across the peninsula, going up the Kennedy River as far as it was navigable. From the head of the river to the Gulf of Carpentaria the land was indifferent sandy soil, ironstone ridges, and swamps with sandy bottom. His party came out on the Gulf a short distance south of Red Island; travelled thence along the beach to the north-east for 7 miles, and then struck across for the settlement. The soil here appeared to be of better quality; but throughout the land he traversed no cattle-stations could be formed, on account of the density of the scrub.

Dr. Haran, R.N., the Medical Officer, thus reports upon the climate and natural features of the new settlement:—

“Although this settlement was only founded about a month ago, and the meteorological observations recorded during the brief interval which has since elapsed, must of necessity be somewhat defective, I consider it my duty to report, for your Excellency's information, that they have been very favourable so far. Between the 4th of August and this date (September 6), the thermometer has registered, in the shade, a mean temperature of 78°, greatest minimum 61°; mean ditto, 70°; maximum, 84°; mean ditto, 82°; greatest difference between wet and dry bulbs, 12°; mean ditto, 6°; thus avoiding either extremes of dryness or supersaturation—both equally injurious. Greatest range, 20°; mean ditto, 9°. In the sun—maximum, 93°; mean ditto, 90°; while the barometer has invariably stood highest about 9 o'clock A.M., and

lowest about 3 o'clock P.M., a fact according with nearly all tropical experience in atmospheric tension and pressure. The nights have been delightfully cool and mild, with heavy dews occasionally; a slight sprinkling of rain occurred on three occasions, and the wind, which, with the exception of three nights of westerly, during which the temperature was reduced to  $61^{\circ}$ , blew with variable force from a south-east direction, tended to modify the mid-day heat (greatest between 11 o'clock A.M. and 2 o'clock P.M.), so much that large working-parties from H.M.S. *Salamander*, and the marines and civilians of the establishment, were constantly exposed to its direct influence, excepting at meal times, without suffering any ill-effects; so much so, indeed, and so far from being injurious to them was this direct solar heat, that the *Salamander* had no sick-list for several days, and the few cases of illness which have occurred on shore were not even indirectly the result of climatical influences. This is a circumstance of much significance, and augurs favourably for the future prospects of the new settlement, while it moreover solves, in some measure, the important question as to whether European labour can be made available in Inter-tropical Australia. It has been proved that Europeans can work in the sun with safety at Cape York, within  $11^{\circ}$  of the Equator, in August and September,—a fact which I believe to be unprecedented, if not an impossibility, in any other part of the world except Australia, in the same or even a much higher latitude; and it is to be presumed that they can do so with equal impunity during that period of the year in which the south-east wind prevails—viz., between March and November. It is even possible that outdoor work may be performed by Europeans during certain portions of the remaining months, when this wind alternates with the north-west, and dissipates the oppressive atmospheric condition which must necessarily result from it. The winds here evidently partake more of the south-east trade than the monsoon character, though not strictly belonging to either system from their regularity; and it would seem as if this spur of the great Australian continent occupied a sort of neutral ground between the two, but in closer proximity to the region of the south-east trade-wind, which is said to prevail here for at least nine months of the year. The situation of the township is not only well selected, and admirably adapted for receiving the full benefit of the prevailing winds, but it also possesses the additional attraction of beautiful scenery, and a magnificent view of the inner passage through Torres Straits. It contains some highly picturesque ridges of from 60 to 140 feet elevation above the mean sea-level, for the most part covered with dense scrub, while the lower grounds—which present a gradual ascent towards a central plateau, from which nearly all the ridges extend—are equally well favoured, and over the entire site some magnificent forest-trees, Eucalypti, Melaleuca, Erithrynæ, &c., and the graceful Caryota-palm further enhance the beauty of the whole; at the same time that the absence of the trees and rank vegetation, which prevail in other tropical countries, would almost divest one of the idea of being only a few degrees removed from the equator. The heights are covered with ironstone, partly disintegrated, overlying a dense stratum of quartzose sandstone, which in some places, as at Cape York and Albany Island, is observed overlying, and in some places replaced by conglomerate and porphyritic granite. The surface soil (ironstone, clay, and decomposed vegetation) is at present very scanty, but will no doubt rapidly increase in quantity, and be made available for various purposes. The lower grounds and slopes possess a soil composed of ironstone, clay, decayed vegetation, and in some places sand, in varying proportions. The water-supply is inexhaustible, and within easy distance of all parts of the township, while the surrounding country, as far as it has been explored, has been found to possess equal advantages, and already four fresh-water lagoons, several peat-swamps, and a few rivulets, in addition to the Polo, have been discovered in a direction to the southward and westward of the settlement. It

is to be presumed that the geological formation of the peninsula, from the Kennedy River to Cape York, does not differ materially from that which obtains in and about Somerset. There is no rank vegetation, and with the exception of creepers very little underwood to be met anywhere, while the physical aspect of what has been seen consists of belts of forest and scrub, an undulating outline, a series of ridges, and between the lines of scrub open patches, sparsely wooded, and partaking of the appearance of English park-scenery. These characteristics, taken in connexion with the absence of mud or mangrove *swamps* of sufficient extent to be so designated (for the narrow fringes of the former on either side of Somerset Bay, and the mixture of both on an equally insignificant scale in a few of the bays towards Cape York, are not worthy of so ominous a title) afford most satisfactory guarantees of the continuance of the unexceptionable sanitary status which obtains at present throughout the entire year."

### 5. *Journey of M. Gerhard Rohlfs through Marocco and Tuat, 1863-64.*

By DR. AUGUSTUS PETERMANN, Hon. Corr. Mem. R.G.S.

M. GERHARD ROHLFS has arrived in safety at Tripoli, after his journey from Marocco, towards the expenses of which the Council contributed 50*l*.\* The following is a sketch of the route followed, communicated in a letter to Sir Roderick I. Murchison, by Dr. Petermann, to whom M. Rohlfs has sent his journals for publication in the '*Geographische Mittheilungen*.'

"Gotha, 23 February, 1865.

"You will have received from M. Gerhard Rohlfs of Bremen a communication relative to his journey from Marocco to Tripoli, for which the Royal Geographical Society kindly assisted him with the grant of 50*l*. As I have received all his original journals and papers, I consider it to be my duty to acquaint you, in a few words, of the value of this journey in a geographical point of view. First, then, in performing the journey from a point between Mekines and Fes in Marocco to Tafilet, he crossed the principal portion of the Atlas, the only snow-covered mountain-mass in Africa; for Kilima-njaro and Kenia are only isolated peaks. Gerhard Rohlfs is the first educated and intelligent European who succeeded in crossing that highly interesting mountainous region, and penetrating beyond it: when he explored the extensive chain of the fertile valleys and oases of Tafilet, Ued Saura, Tsabit, Timmi, Tuat and Tidikelt, the most important regions between Algeria and Timbuktu, which French travellers and armies have for thirty-five years in vain endeavoured to reach, none of them having ever been able to penetrate as far as Gerhard Rohlfs. At Tuat, his small means being well nigh exhausted, he returned to the coast at Tripoli by way of Ghadames, in order to prepare himself afresh for another journey to the interior. At the request of his relatives and myself he came to Germany for a short time, but is now on his way back to Africa. On the opportunity of conversing with him about his journeys and his plans, I recommended to him for his present journey the exploration of the Wady Irharhar—by recent research shown to be the Niger of the ancients (Fluvius Nigris of Pliny, Gher of Ptolemy),—of the highlands of the Tuarego, containing the sources of the Irharhar, and of the headstreams of the Joliba, by which proposed line of journey he might probably not touch Timbuktu, a place popularly rather over-valued, and which has been sufficiently described

\* See '*Proceedings*,' vol. viii. p. 94.